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PARENTS' EVALUATION OF THE HEAD START PROGRAM IN THE
MILWAUKEE PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

BY- BELTON, JOHN GOLDBERG, SIDNEY
MILWAUKEE PUBLIC SCHOOLS, WIS.

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A QUESTIONNAIRE WAS ADMINISTERED TO A REPRESENTATIVE
SAMPLE COMPOSED OF PARENTS OF 50 CHILDREN (TWO PUPILS
RANDOMLY SELECTED FROM EACH OF 25 HEAD START CLASSES).
COMPILED FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRE, STATISTICS ARE REPORTED
CONCERNING (1) REASONS FOR ENROLLMENT OF CHILDREN, (2) DEGREE
OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT, (3) PARENTS' PERCEPTION OF THE HELP
GIVEN THEIR CHILD AND FAMILY, AND (4) PARENTS' SUGGESTIONS
FOR IMPROVING THE PROGRAM. BASED ON THE REPORTED STATISTICS,
IT IS CONCLUDED THAT (1) MANY PARENTS DID NOT SEEK TO INFORM
THEMSELVES ABOUT THE GOALS OF THE PROGRAM, (2) PARENTAL
INVOLVEMENT IN CENTER ACTIVITIES TENDED TO BE MINIMAL AND
MODERATE, AND (3) PARENTS' EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAM WAS VERY
POSITIVE. ALTHOUGH IT IS APPARENT THAT THE HEAD START CENTERS
HAVE ESTABLISHED GOOD RAPPORT WITH THE PARENTS OF THE
COMMUNITY, THE RESULTS OF THIS SURVEY SUGGEST THE NEED FOR
MORE THOROUGH AND EFFECTIVE TECHNIQUES OF INFORMATION
DISSEMINATION AND OF SECURING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE
PROGRAM ACTIVITIES. (JS)

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MILWAUKEE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Fall Semester 1965

Prepared by

John Belton and Sidney Goldberg

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I INTRODUCTION

The fundamental purpose of the Head Start Child Development Center is to provide maximal help to a child through a partnership between the family and professionals and the community. Family involvement is required by the federal government. Parents should not only have a voice in running the Center, but also have an important role in developing policies and in participating in the Center's program. Research has shown that the family is vital to maintaining growth in their children.

Head Start Child Development Centers in some metropolitan communities have been criticized because parents have not been extensively involved in the activities of the Center.

As part of the Milwaukee School System's Evaluation of the Head Start program, a parent questionnaire was compiled by the Department of Educational Research, through Mr. John Belton, in consultation with the School Social Workers assigned to the project; Mrs. Juanita Bell, ACSW and Mr. Sidney Goldberg, ACSW.

This report includes: 1) the results of the Head Start Parent Questionnaire, 2) analysis of the parents' responses, and 3) suggestions and recommendations for further study and improvement.

This report is intended to help the professional staff connected with the program, particularly school principals and teachers who are responsible for coordinating programs involving parents.

II PROCEDURES

Lay Workers, paid assistants to the School Social Workers, administered questionnaires to parents, in a home visit, at the end of the first semester of the 1965-66 school year.

Two pupils were selected at random from each of the 25 classes in the Milwaukee Public School's Head Start Program.

One parent (usually the Mother) was interviewed by the Lay Worker, thus responses were obtained from a representative sample of 50 parents.

The statistics which follow were compiled from the questionnaires.

III FINDINGS

The findings have been classified in four areas: 1) reasons given for enrollment of children, 2) degree of parent involvement, 3) parents' perception of the help given their child and family, and 4) parents' suggestions for improving the program.

SINCE IN ANY GIVEN AREA THE SAME PARENT MIGHT MAKE SEVERAL RESPONSES, THE PERCENTAGES DO NOT NECESSARILY TOTAL 100.

Enrollment of Children

Table 1, which follows, indicates the reasons given by parents for enrolling their children in the Head Start Program.

TABLE 1

Reasons Given For Enrolling Children In Head Start
N = 50

REASON GIVEN	NUMBER	PER CENT
Prepare Child for School	20	40
Social Development	10	20
Increase Child's Respect for Authority	7	14
Child Asked to Go	6	12
Increase Child's Self-Responsibility	4	8
Occupy Child's Time	2	4
Help Child Learn English	1	2

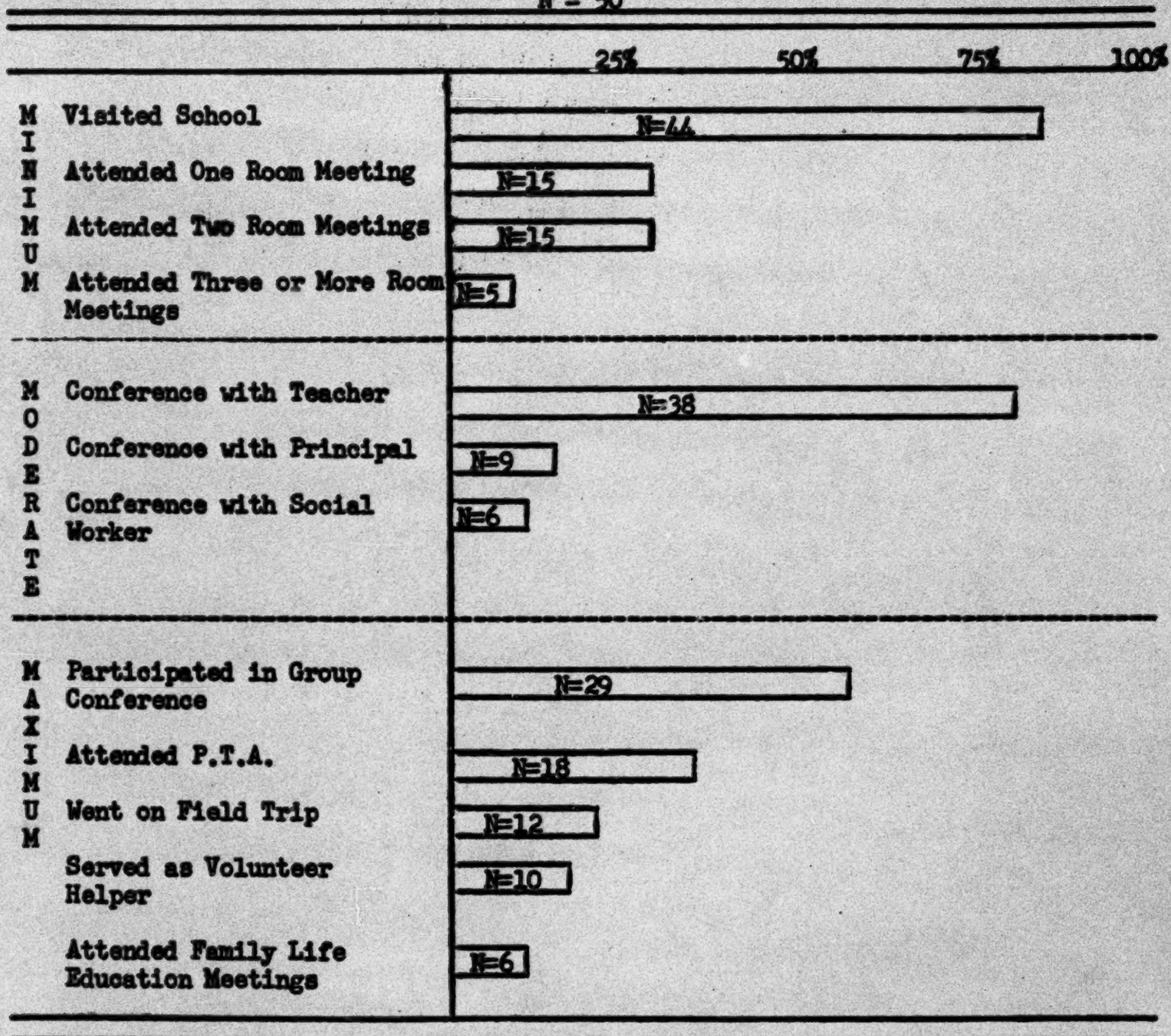
Degree of Parent Involvement

Some parents were not involved in the program, others were involved in more than one kind of activity. The kinds of involvement, minimal, moderate, or maximum, refer to the degree to which it was judged that a parent normally would have to invest himself in the program (For example, attending a room meeting is considered to be a more passive, less contributing role for a parent than attending a family life education meeting and therefore would be classified as "minimal involvement." Volunteering to help in the classroom would be considered "moderate involvement").

Table 2, which follows, indicates the number and percent of the parents interviewed who were classified as being involved with the school in minimal, moderate, or maximum kinds of activities.

TABLE 2

Parent Involvement In Program
N = 50



In regard to the reasons given for conferences with professionals, parents usually had a conference with a teacher to check on their child's progress(20 parents). They had about an equal number of contacts with teachers and principals when there was an adjustment problem(8 & 5 contacts respectively).

It appeared that very few parents (5) took initiative to get information about the program in general from the teachers, principal, or school social worker.

Parent's Perception of Help Given

Parents were asked to state how the program helped their child or their family. Their responses were classified as indicated in Tables 3 and 4.

TABLE 3
Parents' Perception Of Help Given Child
N = 50

IMPROVEMENT	NUMBER	PER CENT
General Education	17	34
General Social Growth	15	30
Self-Reliance	10	20
Discipline	9	18
Table Manners and Eating Habits	6	12
Speech	5	10
Self-Confidence	4	8
Other	3	6

TABLE 4

Parents' Perception Of Help Given Family
N = 50

IMPROVEMENT OBSERVED	NUMBER	PER CENT
Sibling and Family Relationships	16	32
Interest in Learning	12	24
Verbal Communication	2	4

Parents Suggestions

Without exception parents felt that the program helped "Very Much". Criticisms were slight and generally in the areas of wanting more than could be offered at this time. This seemed to come more from parents of children in the Saturday morning classes.

Seventeen parents had no suggestions.

TABLE 5

Parents' Suggestions To The Program
N = 50

RESPONSE	NUMBER	PER CENT
Want More Daily Centers Instead Of Saturday Centers	4	8
Want More Hot Lunches	4	8
Teach More Academic Material	3	6
Want More Field Trips	1	2
Want Bus Transportation	1	2
Want More Information About Program	1	2

IV SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of the Child Development Center is to provide maximum help to a child thru a partnership between the family and professionals and the community. Family involvement is encouraged by the federal government to the point that parents should not only have a voice in running the Center, but also have an important role in developing policies and in the Center's program.

The results of the questionnaire may be evaluated in terms of how much or how little the goal of involving parents in the program was met. This must be viewed in perspective. There were differences in the amount of information about the program given parents by different schools.

The following conclusions are drawn from the data presented previously:

1. It would appear that many parents did not seek to inform themselves about the goals of the program. It would appear therefore, that the similarity between the aims of the program and the reasons why parents enrolled their children was a coincidence.
2. As a group, parents involved themselves in many Center activities. They tended toward minimal and moderate involvement activities. Parents appear to need encouragement to become more intensively involved in the Center program. Apparently, many parents view the program as child oriented rather than family oriented.

3. In general, the parents evaluation of the program was very positive. They noted many social, emotional, and educational improvements in their children and family relationships.

These results suggest two main areas that could be studied further:

Methods of informing the parents about the complete scope of the program need to be reviewed. This might also involve orientation of the teachers to the kinds of programs which inform and involve parents since it is known that parents have more contact with teachers than with other professional personnel.

More written material might be distributed to the parents. A newsletter developed and distributed by parents at one Center proved especially effective.

Techniques to more effectively involve parents in the program need to be perfected. Many parents lack initiative and do not appear to know how to proceed.

It is apparent that the Head Start Centers have established good rapport with the parents of the community which should provide a basis for continued cooperation and improvement of the program.

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FROM:

ERIC FACILITY

SUITE 601

1735 EYE STREET, N. W.

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20006